



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i

Testimony to the Thirty-First State Legislature, 2021 Regular Session

House Committee on Corrections, Military & Veterans

Representative Takashi Ohno, Chair

Representative Sonny Ganaden, Vice Chair

Friday, February 5, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 430

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

by

Christine E. Kuriyama

Senior Judge, Deputy Chief Judge

Family Court of the First Circuit

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 835, Relating to the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy.

Purpose: Appropriates funds to support the ongoing operations of the Hawai‘i National Guard Youth Challenge Program.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary offers the following testimony in support of the bill:

1. The Hawai‘i National Guard Youth Challenge Academy (“Youth Challenge”) is a community-based program that provides and teaches life changing structure, education, values, and skills for “at promise” youth throughout the state of Hawai‘i.
2. Youth Challenge has been a valuable partner of the Family Court across all islands. It provides the necessary services to divert “at promise” youth from the juvenile justice system and also serves as a much needed alternative to detention.

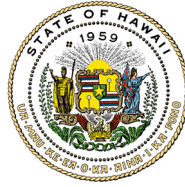


House Bill No. 835, Relating to the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy
House Committee on Corrections, Military & Veterans
Friday, February 5, 2021 10:00 a.m.
Page 2

3. Based upon the foregoing, the Judiciary respectfully requests that the Legislature appropriate the necessary funds to support this essential program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



LATE

KENNETH S. HARA
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL

STEPHEN F. LOGAN
COLONEL
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 835
RELATING TO THE NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE ACADEMY

PRESENTATION TO
THE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS, MILITARY, & VETERANS

BY

BG BRUCE E. OLIVEIRA, USA, RETIRED
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS DIRECTOR
DIRECTOR OF THE HAWAII EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
STATE OF HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

FEBRUARY 4, 2021

Chair Ohno, Vice Chair Ganaden, and Members of the Committee on Corrections, Military, & Veterans

I am BG (R) Bruce Oliveira, Community Programs Director, State of Hawaii Department of Defense.

The Department of Defense (DOD) provides written **comment** for testimony of HB 835.

This measure, if passed would, appropriate funds to support the ongoing operations of the Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Program. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1.7M for fiscal year 2021-2022 and the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 to support the ongoing operations of the Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Program. Our work with "at promise youth" has allowed us to teach our youth about the potential they have for impacting our communities in very profound and substantial ways. The Youth Challenge cadets are learning to reframe their challenging lived experiences as assets, and to understand how those assets constitute much of the promise they bring to the State of Hawaii.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in Support of HB 835.

The DOD does not support this measure if it impacts or replaces the priorities set forth in the Executive Budget.

Director Bruce Oliveira, bruce.e.oliveira@hawaii.gov; 808-672-1260

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 11:31:24 AM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Li Cobian	Oahu Motorsports Association	Support	No

Comments:

As a At-Risk Mentor and Motivational Speaker i have had the honor of visiting the Youth Challenge Campus in Kalaeloa and I fully support this program.

I have witnessed first hand the lives changed and saved of at-risk youths, that i knew personally through my involvement in coaching motorsports , by the Youth Challenge program.

This program is vital to our community and our youths.

Li Cobian of Oahu Motorsports Association

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 11:45:42 AM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
ashley fejeran	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a graduate, I feel yca Hilo have helped save and changed so many at risk teens and being one of them not knowing who I was doing all the wrong things in life going no where and making wrong choices thinking I was cool but I was just screwing up my life when I made the choice to go to youth challenge Hilo I was scared and hated the idea but once I was there I realized how much it was good for me, it was the best thing to ever happen to me it changed me for the better and helped me get to where I need to be and realized how I can be myself and making right decisions isn't lame and it's actually better for me and everybody in my life and just being myself and now I have a job and planning on starting college and I'm only 16 so if it can get me somewhere and change my life I'm so many amazing ways I believe this program can help so many more youth and the people there are like family they never judge they support you and respect you if you respect them and they care only about you and getting you to better places and give it there all to give us a better life so enough of my whole essay, I just feel we really need youth challenge Hilo for the Benifit of the youth and our future

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 3:43:13 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Greylen Fernandez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I Greylen Fernandez, support Youth Challenge Academy. I am a graduate from class #20, graduated December 18th 2020. Youth Challenge has completely changed my life around. When I first entered YCA, the previous grade I graduated was the 4th grade. I never saw myself going to college or even having my highschool diploma, or GED anytime soon. However, Youth Challenge changed that. I graduated with my HiSET diploma, & Work Force Diploma. I am now in community college, studying Computer Science. In 5 1/2 months my life has changed in so many ways, more than I ever imagined. I have watched as the program changed many of my fellow graduates lives. Without Youth Challenge, I wouldn't be the person I am today. I was at-risk when I entered, and YCA changed that completely. Instilling discipline, confidence, purpose, and direction in me. I have nothing but love, and support for Youth Challenge Academy.

- Graduate Greylen Fernandez

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 3:47:04 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melissa Moats	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I write in full support of funding the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy. The Academy provides a vital service to the youth of the Big Island and to the community at large. The youth of the Big Island need a viable alternative pathway to success, and the Youth Challenge Academy provides just that. The Academy helps serve our at risk youth and helps give them the support, structure, and skills needed to transition to adulthood and into responsible members of our community. As a registered nurse, I know first hand the myriad of challenges that our youth face, especially during a pandemic. During this time of uncertainty, it is even more essential to have the Youth Challenge Academy as an educational option for our island youth. Please fully fund the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy, our future depends on it.

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 4:15:26 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Maya Anthony-Crosby	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I believe the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy carries out deeply needed and valued work within the community and is a great service to the individuals who attend. I believe it deserves the funding it requires to continue serving the youth of Hawaii.

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 6:50:42 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ruben Betts	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha ladies and gentlemen of the House of Representatives of the state of Hawaii. My name is Ruben Betts. I am a graduate of class 20 of the youth Challenge Academy in Hilo. I am in full support of this bill, that would appropriate funds to continue the operation of the academy. As a graduate I know firsthand the great things that this program brings not only to the big Island, but to the state as a whole. I've seen many kids, in the beginning have no place to go. Most of them have dropped out, or on probation, we're trying to get sober and trying to get back on track. I must say that this program has helped alleviate all of that. Many kids that had come there had been through many programs, and had finally graduated this one. This program has a different approach that allows people to graduate with more success. I myself went to the program because of covid, and did not want to finish my high school years on a computer. now that I have my high school diploma early I can now achieve my goals. It got me to look at life differently. Many graduates said had gone to the program we're on probation before they came in. They are now off probation and on to better things. Many of those graduates want to join the military, well some went to go to college. Many cadets were on hard drugs before they came in, in fact there were some that suffered withdrawals during the first couple of weeks. now they are off those drugs and on a better path. This program definitely does help the big Island, as a big island has a lot of low-income at-risk areas. This program is one of the most important social programs we can have. In conclusion I support this bill to help allocate funds to continue the program, as I know this program works. Thank you so much for your time.

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/3/2021 10:13:58 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kellie Frias	Hilo High School	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing today in support of HB 835 relating to the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy. I have been a counselor in the State of Hawaii for 15 years, and have seen the Youth Challenge Academy help so many young people and their families during some of the most difficult times of their lives.

As educators, we want high school graduation and academic success for every one of our students, but we also understand the reality that the traditional structure and requirements of our public school system are not conducive for everyone. The National Guard Youth Challenge Academy has provided hope and a positive outlook on the future, for so many students each year. Students and families who believed they would never earn a diploma, have done exactly that. Students come out of the 5.5 month Youth Challenge Academy program as respectful, responsible young people with goals and direction. They come back to our high school to speak with younger students about making good choices and believing in themselves. They continue to give back to their community, and work toward being productive members of society.

The reason I believe the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy program is so effective, is the military-based structure and immense support provided. Many of our struggling students lack the discipline needed to be successful in large public schools, but through the strict program, and with the 24/7 care and attention of the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy staff, even our most troubled students can thrive.

The loss of this program would be detrimental to our local community, and to our State as a whole. I implore you to continue to fund this much needed resource for our youth.

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 12:06:20 AM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nilton Oyama	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Nilton Oyama and I am a counselor at Hilo High School. I am in support of house bill 835, for continued funding to support the ongoing operations of the Hawaii national guard youth challenge program in Hilo.

The Hawaii Youth Challenge program has been a very important life line for some of our students who for whatever reason was not able to succeed at the high school level. The Hawaii Youth Challenge program in Hilo has helped many of those students develop respect and discipline to be productive citizens of our community after going through the program.

I have seen the pride and accomplishments first hand with my own students who I have referred to the academy. The life skills that these young cadets learn at the academy is something that gives these young men and women hope that they can succeed in their future.

One of my fondest memory was when one of my former students who graduated from the Hawaii Youth Challenge came back to see me at Hilo High to thank me for referring him to the program. He became a different person who once didn't care about anything to a person who was respectful and appreciative for a second chance to build a better future for himself.

On the Big Island, our resources for young people are limited. Losing the Hawaii Youth Challenge program in Hilo would greatly impact our ability to service these high risk students. I humbly implore you to continue to keep this needed program on the Big Island. Thank you very much for the opportunity to voice my support for this invaluable program.

LATE

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 10:04:04 AM
Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Johna Manoha	DOE	Support	No

Comments:

This testimony is in support of the Youth Challenge Program in Hilo, Hawaii. I'm a School Counselor and work with the at-risk population here in Hilo, HI at one of the High Schools. The program has done wonders for many of my at-risk students. These are students that would have likely dropped out of high school due to many issues and would end up in our community. The Youth Challenge Program, provides opportunities for these students. They not only provide academic support, but most importantly social/emotional/occupational/career goals support and they continue to track students once they leave the program. This is key to the success of the individual, having a continued connection to the program via mentors. The Youth Challenge Program is vital for some of our students. Please reconsider and allow the Youth Challenge Program to continue operations here in Hilo.

Thank you!

LATE

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 12:14:55 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Agnes S Yamauchi	Hilo High School	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a counselor at Hilo High School and have been here for over 20 years. Throughout those years, I have had many students who found coming to school a challenge for whatever reason. As much as we try, we are not able to engage with these students and must offer some kind of alternative, if not, they will become society's problem. One of the most successful alternatives that we can offer is the Youth Challenge Program. Although it may not be 100% fool-proof, it is a great alternative that turns students around! When a student sees no hope for their future and everything in their lives has failed them, YC gives them that structure that they actually need. Personally, it is that freedom of choice that was allowed them that has gotten them to this point in the first place. I had one student tell me, "No Miss, when I get in, that's when I will behave and follow rules, until then, I don't need to."

The students need the structure and want to be held accountable. They thrive in this environment because their family structure and environment is absent. One of my students that graduated entered after her father committed suicide and her younger brother just dropped out of middle school. In order to get signatures, I went to their home and was appalled by what I saw. I can't imagine my student's thoughts when she saw the living conditions she was going to have in YC. I'm sure there must be other students in YC that have far worse conditions than my student. Youth Challenge not only changes the person, discipline wise, but the program opens students eyes to options and better futures. When my student graduated, I made every effort to go because I wanted her to see how proud I was of her and to let her know that I was there for support if she ever needed it in the future.

I currently have a student that is awaiting to enter into YC when he turns 16. His father is in and out of jail and he hasn't engaged in school since middle school. Without YC, he may follow his father's footsteps.

On behalf of my students, past and present, I write this testimony and ask that you continue to fund this much needed program. Without it, many of my future students will continue to not have hope for a better future!

Thank you!

Agnes Yamauchi

Counselor (L-P)

Hilo High School

LATE

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 12:37:45 PM
Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Wendy Hamane	Hilo High School	Support	No

Comments:

The Youth Challenge Academy serves a critical role in a continuum of services for adolescents. Not all youths have the maturity nor support systems in place to attain success in a traditional academic setting. For many, they fall further and further behind in school until earning a high school diploma is no longer a viable option. The YCA offers the opportunity to continue with academic skill development AND SO MUCH MORE! These youths are supported within the umbrella of structure, discipline, and mentoring to set and to achieve goals related to their intellectual and personal growth, as well as to earn a high school equivalency diploma. They are also significant contributors to our community via service learning projects. Especially now during this pandemic, with school closures resulting in increased numbers of students failing in school, alternatives will be needed more than ever. Without the YCA, there will be one less safety net to address the fall-out that is surely coming.

LATE

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 1:32:10 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dawn Tillery	Hilo High School	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

The Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Academy-Hilo Campus provides a unique service to the Big Island. By changing the mindset and behavior of teens who are otherwise on a path of delinquency, the Youth Challenge Academy helps the entire community. Time and again, I have seen graduates of their program become contributing members of our community. It would be enough if the Youth Challenge Academy only made a difference for the individual teens and their immediate families. The fact that the academy also prevents taxpayers the great expense associated with future delinquent behavior and illegal activity is further reason to be sure that the Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Academy-Hilo Campus remains fully funded.

Thank you,

Dawn Tillery

school counselor

From:Sherry Bracken <jbkslb@kona.net>
Sent:Thursday, February 4, 2021 1:50:30 PM
To:Rep. Greggor Ilagan <repilagan@capitol.hawaii.gov>
Subject:Support for Bill 835

Aloha, Rep Ilagan,

Please consider this my testimony in support of Bill 835, providing funding for Youth Challenge Academy.

Until December 31, 2020, when I retired, I hosted a weekly interview program and did radio news reporting, since 2004. I've lived in Kona since 1994. I had occasion to do stories plus an interview about Youth Challenge Academy several years ago. It was clear then that the program has the potential to be life changing.

Within the past several months, I had the opportunity to interview two people who were students at the YCA, young people headed in completely the wrong direction, who credited the YCA with turning their lives around.

One is now a Hawaii County Police Officer who has been recognized three times, I believe, for his good work as Officer of the Month by the Kona Crime Prevention Committee. He told me he was hanging out with the wrong crowd and knew he would continue down the wrong path if not for Youth Challenge Academy. He told me he is so impressed by YCA that he has on occasion suggested to high school students whom he was called to deal with as an officer that they should consider YCA to help them get on the path to positive adulthood.

Another graduate is a young woman who is now a successful college student. She told me she was, before entering YCA, spending time with an older man, in an inappropriate situation, and was not motivated by her at-the-time high school here on the island. Her mother got her enrolled in YCA, and the young woman said the discipline and leadership there helped her turn her life around. She is not only in college in Hilo, but also is working. I know her mother and knew her as a child, and I can attest, she is now on the road to being a successful adult, with proper motivation and ambition.

This is a really important facility for our island. It has really been good for the community, in helping create great citizens. Please help this fine program continue here on the Big Island, as it is sorely needed.

with aloha,
Sherry Bracken

Sherry Bracken
PO Box 248, Kailua-Kona HI 96745
H 808-334-1521 C 808-936-2328
jbkslb@kona.net

LATE

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/4/2021 4:18:01 PM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Brent Keliokamalu Nakihei	Juvenile Client & Family Services (Molokai Branch)	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Brent Keliokamalu Nakihei, the current Juvenile Probation Officer on Molokai. I am in support of HB835, as the Youth Challenge Program has helped a lot of my clients to make positive changes. Molokai needs this program for our Youths to make impacts that will affect them for the rest of their lives, as well as their family's. Mahalo.



LATE

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HILO HIGH SCHOOL
556 WAIANUENUE AVE
HILO, HAWAII 96720

To: Hawaii State Representatives
From: Charlene H. Masuhara
Student Activities Coordinator
RE: Hawaii Army National Guard Youth Challenge Academy - HB835

As a former Career and College Counselor for over thirty years and currently as the Student Activities Coordinator at Hilo High, I have worked with many young people in their quest to graduate from high school and to find a path to their future. Often we have students who have difficulties, whether it is academically, emotionally, or socially and we have worked to provide alternate venues for all of them. The program which has brought about the most robust change in many of these students is the Hawaii Army National Guard Youth Challenge Academy.

I have been fortunate to work with the wonderful people who provide the wide variety of services for the students who are part of YCA. I have observed them working with students in classes, been in awe of their physical training and have been most impressed with their attitude and behavior. They are polite, helpful and always remember to say "Yes Sir or Yes Madam". As a representative of my school who has attended their graduation, I am so proud of what these students accomplish, the smiles on their faces and the gratitude and tears of their parents. The program has and will always make a lasting impression on them as they continue to grow as they become contributing citizens of our community.

There are two sections of their program which I continue to be very impressed with, the first been Career Education. As one of the coordinators for the Big Island Na Op'io Career Expo, I have worked with many of the young people who not only help us in the set up and take down of this awesome project for hundreds of students from East Hawaii but the quality of their participation in the Expo itself. They diligently prepare and visit with the presenters, ask thought provoking questions, share their own experiences with them and most importantly inquiries about job opportunities after the leave YCA. Many have been fortunate to continue their education with the help of some of these presenters, have found mentors to help through the next few difficult years in their lives and always thanks them sincerely and with much gratitude. The other section of their program is community service. Not only do they assist agencies and groups in our community to provide manpower to ensure that work gets done, but they share of themselves in presentations as they take with other students who may be in the scary place they were in before. They share their experiences and always encourage young people to study hard, work hard and most importantly to believe in themselves. I continue to be in awe of a program that can do all of this for students that we in the public schools often find the most difficult. The Hawaii Army National Guard Youth Challenge Academy has been there to help us to ensure that all students can find success.

As an educator who has been fortunate to know first hand about the YCA program, I would like to ask you to consider the actions you take in regards to the program. I would like to encourage you to listen carefully to the testimony especially from the students, their parents and from the many educators who are sharing their voice. Know that we are sincere about the success of the Hawaii Army National Guard Youth Challenge Academy and the significant impact it has on our schools and the young people whose lives they touch. I hope you will consider funding the program so we may continue to make a difference in lives of our students.

-----Original Message-----

From: K. T. Cannon-Eger <kteger@hawaii.rr.com>

Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2021 7:05 PM

To: Rep. Chris Todd <reptodd@capitol.hawaii.gov>; Rep. Greggor Ilagan <repilagan@capitol.hawaii.gov>

Subject: Youth Challenge

Dear Rep. Todd and Rep. Ilagan,

Thank you for representing Hawai`i Island.

I would like to add my voice to those urging support for the Youth Challenge program on Hawai`i Island. They have been a great help to all sorts of community projects and in doing so have built teamwork, skills, and good work habits.

In particular I am familiar with the young people of Youth Challenge and their mentors through Mokuola and Lili`uokalani Gardens where I have witnessed their perseverance and fortitude.

Please do all you can to see this worthwhile program continues.

In deep gratitude,

K.T. Cannon-Eger

LATE

HB-835

Submitted on: 2/5/2021 8:31:53 AM

Testimony for CMV on 2/5/2021 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
April Gaoiran	Hawaii Department of Education	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Hawai'i State Legislature,

On behalf of the Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Academy-Hilo campus, I highly support the need for funding in order to prolong the use of this program. I am a Behavioral Health Specialist at Honoka'a High & Intermediate School, who has recommended Youth Challenge to several families, and over time have seen how that program has changed the lives of our youth. Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Academy has allowed our students to have hope for their futures, since they did not thrive in a traditional classroom setting. Defunding this program, will affect the future of countless young people from our local communities, that may not have any other options. Many of these students suffer from trauma, stress, and anxiety or come from a home without structure, where this program provides them structure, safety, and care to live a better life for themselves. Without this program, these students aren't given a second chance. Please help support our community efforts at creating opportunities for our youth to thrive.

With Blessings,

April M. Gaoiran